United Nations A/C.3/57/SR.47

General Assembly

Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr. General
15November 2002
English
Original: French

Third Committee

Summary record of the 47th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 13 November 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson : Ms. Leyton ..... (Chile)

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02-69178 (E) 191203

In the absence of Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein), Ms. Leyton (Chile), Vice-Chairperson, took the chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 104: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (*continued*) (A/56/3, A/57/12 and A/57/12/Add.1, A/57/203, A/57/324 and A/57/583)

1. **Mr. Tomič** (Slovenia) said that even though many refugees had been able to return home over recent years, millions of others still awaited protection from the international community.

2. Slovenia welcomed the process of Global Consultations, which had encouraged exchanges of opinion between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and other major partners in the field of international protection. It also welcomed the new Agenda for Protection, and would assist in its implementation.

3. The vital importance of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol on the protection of refugees had been highlighted on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of its creation. Slovenia awaited with interest the conclusions of the annual Round Table on Current Problems of International Humanitarian Law.

4. UNHCR had been striving hard to integrate into its programmes the special needs of particularly vulnerable groups such as women and children. For its part, Slovenia had supported some major UNHCR activities, notably in environmental management, reproductive health and the battle against HIV/AIDS in refugee environments.

5. Slovenia agreed with the High Commissioner about the need to search for lasting solutions, based in particular on repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction (the "4Rs"). Slovenia's position was based on its experience as a host country for refugees and displaced persons fleeing the conflict in the Balkans region. It was encouraging to note that the Balkans was now regaining a certain degree of stability, thanks notably to the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. Several major initiatives launched in 2001, including the Regional Return Initiative (RRI) and the Regional Programme of Action, had encouraged the return of minority groups to Croatia and to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

6. The process of returning refugees continued to be a difficult one, however, and should be supported by efforts to help the refugees recover a satisfactory level of self-reliance.

7. It was also important to recognize the wisdom of integrating refugees into host countries, as well as the contribution that they could make to such countries. In order to facilitate the integration of the many refugees from the Balkans into Slovenian society, the Government of Slovenia had offered them the opportunity to obtain permanent resident status and to attend various courses on Slovenia's language, culture and history.

8. **Ms. Martina** (Ukraine) said that Ukraine's recent adherence to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol on the status of refugees had helped lay the foundations for the formulation of national migration laws.

9. Despite its present economic difficulties, Ukraine attracted many refugees because of its liberal immigration laws, its interethnic harmony, its internal stability, and the tightening of immigration laws in western Europe. More than half of those granted refugee status in Ukraine wished to prolong their stay in the country, and some even wanted to establish permanent residence there.

10. Thanks to the active cooperation of UNHCR's Ukraine office, the Ukrainian Government had since 1994 hosted over 2,000 refugees, most of whom were from Afghanistan, and set up assistance and integration programmes.

11. Ukraine also welcomed the assistance it had received from UNHCR in its efforts to implement its recently revised law on citizenship. That assistance had taken the form of training and sensitization activities and technical support. She was also grateful for the assistance Ukraine had received from UNHCR, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Crimea Integration and Development Programme, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the International Committee of the Red

Cross and other organizations, as well as donor countries, in its efforts to deal with the issue of returnees and their integration into Ukrainian society.

12. One of Ukraine's priorities in the area of migration was the return of the Tatars to Crimea and the return of other nationals deported during the period of the totalitarian regime, and their reintegration into their homeland. Since the 1990s, over 260,000 former deportees and their families had returned to Crimea.

13. The efforts made to resolve the question of the citizenship of returnees within a multilateral framework, notably through the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Agreement on questions relating to the restoration of the rights of deportees, national minorities and peoples, had achieved limited success. The Ukrainian Government therefore intended to negotiate a number of bilateral accords, such as that reached with Uzbekistan, under which some 23,000 people had been granted Ukrainian citizenship.

14. The Ukrainian governmental agencies responsible for migration issues would benefit from the support of the international community in the areas of human resources training, technology, administration, follow-up and evaluation. The Ukrainian Government very much hoped that UNHCR would continue helping to improve existing programmes and to strengthen cooperation between government institutions and non-governmental organizations, so that Ukraine could address problems relating to refugees, asylum-seekers, and former deportees.

15. **Ms. Rodsmoen** (Norway) said that it was important to begin a fundamental discussion, without further delay, on the operations and funding of UNHCR. As the High Commissioner himself had noted, there was a widespread misunderstanding of just how precarious the organization's financial situation was.

16. UNHCR had for several years suffered serious financial difficulties that had virtually paralyzed its operations. That situation had exacerbated the plight of refugees because UNHCR had been unable to bring them all the assistance they needed.

17. The system for funding UNHCR's budget should therefore be re-examined. The first requirement for remedying the situation was to promote a better sharing of responsibilities. All those responsible for adopting UNHCR's budget should participate in its funding, rather than leaving the task to just a few States. The ultimate goal was to ensure that the budgeted resources were effectively available.

18. One solution would be to increase the transfers made from the United Nations' ordinary budget in order to cover UNHCR's administrative spending, as provided for in UNHCR's statutes. If, on the other hand, there should be a preference for retaining the principle of voluntary contributions, then donor activities should be better coordinated. Also, UNHCR's funding base should be expanded to include as many States as possible.

19. Norway welcomed UNHCR's expressed desire to explore new approaches to funding and to reconsider certain questions relating to UNHCR's operating methods. She therefore looked forward to the discussion due to be held next year by UNHCR organs and the General Assembly concerning UNHCR's proposed "Convention Plus" initiative.

20. Rather than simply accepting the present situation, the international community should, as a matter of urgency, seek lasting solutions to the refugee problem, particularly in the context of protracted refugee situations. While continuing to devote itself exclusively to humanitarian and social action, and eschewing any political position, UNHCR should also continue to promote lasting solutions to the question of refugees. Those solutions, which should apply to as many refugees as possible, should also benefit host countries, notably within the framework of the "development by integration" approach advocated by the High Commissioner.

21. Norway hoped that the present difficulties would encourage the international community not just to give new impetus to the vital tool that UNHCR represented, but also to seek innovative solutions to the problem of long-term refugees.

22. **Mr. Schurti** (Liechtenstein) said that his country had increased its contribution to UNHCR's general budget and to the country programmes for Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

23. Although the reduction in the number of refugees around the world was certainly to be welcomed, it should also be noted that the refugee question remained one of the most serious of all humanitarian problems and that many refugee situations had deteriorated into

protracted crises that could potentially destabilize certain regions.

24. Liechtenstein therefore welcomed UNHCR's expressed desire to seek lasting solutions, particularly within the context of its "Convention Plus" initiative, which was designed to address situations not covered by the 1951 Convention.

25. The new multilateral agreements that would complement the Convention should make it possible not just to limit humanitarian crises but also to alleviate the burden that they represented. International cooperation should ensure that refugees were afforded protection and assistance as near as possible to their place of origin, in order to facilitate their repatriation and integration. The international community should also ensure that refugees living in the camps did not become the victims of criminal activities such as trafficking in human beings.

26. As the High Commissioner had stressed, host countries should not regard refugees and asylum-seekers solely as a burden, but also as individuals who were capable of contributing towards development. The experience of Liechtenstein had provided conclusive evidence of that. The refugees hosted by Liechtenstein (most of whom had come from Bosnia and Herzegovina and from Kosovo) had been able to earn their living while enjoying a special protected status. That arrangement had not only reduced the cost of hosting the refugees, but had also helped the repatriation process significantly, since virtually all the refugees had been able to take home savings with which to rebuild their communities. Furthermore, offering employment opportunities to refugees and asylum-seekers ensured that they were perceived more positively in the host country, thereby limiting stereotypes and manifestations of xenophobia.

27. Discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance towards refugees seemed to be on the increase. States should adopt the measures necessary to protect the basic rights and freedoms of refugees, who were among the world's most vulnerable population groups. The principle of the prohibition of expulsion or return was based on the idea that refugees' right to life required special protection. Moreover, in the context of the war on terrorism, the protection and promotion of human rights required particular attention. The Programme of Action on refugee protection, which had been adopted unanimously by States parties to the Convention in December 2001 at the Global Consultations on international refugee protection, set out a list of practical directives for UNHCR, States, and other partners. In particular, States were required to act with discretion and to ensure scrupulous respect for the rule of law.

28. **Ms. Dempster** (New Zealand), referring to the ministerial-level meeting of States parties to the 1951 Convention on the status of refugees, held in Geneva in December 2001 as part of the process of Global Consultations on international protection, said that although the Convention remained the basic instrument for international refugee protection, it was no longer adequate to deal with the growing complexity of today's problems. She therefore applauded the efforts of the High Commissioner to revitalize the system of refugee protection and welcomed the adoption of the Agenda for Protection following the process of Global Consultations, as well as his "Convention Plus" initiative. Both initiatives had been the central focus of discussions during the fifty-third session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (ExCom), held in October 2002. New Zealand, which had participated for the first time in an ExCom session as member, had expressed its firm desire to help combat trafficking in persons and trafficking in migrants. New Zealand also intended to play an active role in the follow-up to the Agenda for Protection and to the "Convention Plus" initiative.

29. With regard to UNHCR's serious budgetary difficulties, the international community should be ready to provide the appropriate support to the High Commissioner's actions. Because 7 out of 10 refugees were hosted by some of the world's poorest countries, developed countries should strive to improve the sharing of burdens in refugee protection. New Zealand was bearing its share of the burden, notably by funding United Nations refugee programmes and by accepting an annual quota of refugees from UNHCR. She welcomed the High Commissioner's efforts to expand the community of host countries.

30. The New Zealand region was not immune to the repercussions of the refugee problem and the increase in trafficking in persons, as demonstrated by the events surrounding the merchant ship Tampa in August 2001. On that occasion, New Zealand had found an immediate solution to the humanitarian crisis, initially accepting 131 asylum-seekers who had been on board the ship and subsequently accepting 14 more shipwreck

victims who had transited in Nauru. Those 145 Afghan refugees were now perfectly integrated into the country and were contributing to the cultural diversity that was characteristic of New Zealand society.

31. New Zealand was not the only country in the Asia Pacific region to be affected by the refugee problem. Thirty-eight countries in the region (whether countries of origin, transit countries or host countries) had taken part in the First Regional Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, which had been held in Bali (Indonesia) in February 2002 and co-sponsored by Australia and Indonesia. Since then, Governments in the region had been working actively to develop a joint regional strategy to combat such crime. For its part, New Zealand had taken an active part in the follow-up to the conference, and was leading a group of experts charged with strengthening regional and international cooperation. More broadly, New Zealand wished to play its part in all initiatives introduced by UNHCR with a view to addressing shortcomings in the present system of refugee protection.

32. **Mr. Gaspar Martins** (Angola), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), welcomed the adoption of the Agenda for Protection, which offered a realistic framework for joint global action aimed at guaranteeing protection for refugees, with international cooperation and partnerships having a central role to play. He expressed optimism regarding the results achieved by Africa in its efforts to regulate the situation of refugees and displaced persons on that continent, which was host to 26 per cent of persons of concern to UNHCR around the world (with 42 per cent of refugees in Africa being hosted by SADC countries).

33. The progress towards peace recently achieved in the SADC region was particularly encouraging. The peace achieved in Angola was the result of efforts made at the national, regional and international levels with a view to achieving lasting and comprehensive solutions to today's complex problems. Since the signing of the ceasefire agreement, in April 2002, some 10,000 Angolans had returned home voluntarily, and UNHCR estimated that 80,000 would have returned home by the end of 2002.

34. Angola called upon the international community, Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society in general to cooperate with UNHCR, on the basis of mutual support and the sharing of responsibilities, in order to guarantee the repatriation of refugees, in full security, and their reintegration into their countries of origin. The SADC believed that UNHCR should review and strengthen its various partnerships, especially those with the World Bank, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), because it was convinced of the important role those organizations played in the socio-economic reintegration and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons. Those partnerships at the international level must be complemented by partnerships with a range of regional and subregional organizations, notably the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and SADC. Those partnerships could help identify lasting solutions, within frameworks such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

35. SADC member States that hosted refugees provided basic education for children and training for women in income-generating activities within the context of national programmes. They were particularly affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and therefore attached the highest priority to the battle against the scourge that it represented. The persistent drought that threatened the lives of nearly 14.8 million people in the region continued to increase the vulnerability of the population, including refugees and displaced persons, and the health situation in some countries was deteriorating to an alarming degree. Countries in the region therefore appealed to the international community to provide them with the humanitarian aid necessary to prevent famine and increased poverty.

36. Mindful of the need to continue to work closely with UNHCR on the question of refugee movements, the SADC had held two regional workshops, in Lusaka and Pretoria, aimed at achieving a consensus on fundamental concepts and issues concerning women's and children's rights and gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation. The SADC deplored the recently uncovered cases of sexual exploitation and

therefore welcomed UNHCR's adoption of a code of conduct for its staff.

37. As regards UNHCR's worrying financial situation, Angola regretted its repercussions for African countries, particularly with respect to the heavier burden imposed on host countries. It therefore urged all States to respond rapidly to the appeal for funds launched by UNHCR, in the firm belief - shared by all SADC countries - that the southern African region was on the road towards peace, stability and security. The SADC was ready to play a major role in implementing NEPAD in order to help combat poverty and to promote sustainable development.

38. **Mr. Ousmane** (Algeria) said that even though the number of refugees of concern to UNHCR had fallen in 2001, general instability and persistent unrest had led to population displacement, especially in Africa. Furthermore, due to poverty, the lack of career prospects, and insufficient resources, those displaced population groups were in a highly vulnerable condition. Efforts should therefore be made to seek lasting solutions to refugee problems, not just through preventive action, but also by improving coordination between those responsible for implementing humanitarian and development actions. Algeria had always supported UNHCR and believed that the High Commissioner's mandate should be renewed. Out of a spirit of solidarity, it would continue to provide assistance to refugees from the Western Sahara until a final settlement of the conflict in that region had been achieved. It urged the international community to give UNHCR greater financial support, in particular so that it could assist developing countries, which hosted the highest number of refugees, until definitive solutions could be found to the root causes of population displacements.

39. **Ms. Effah-Apenteng** (Ghana) said that UNHCR was able to assist only half of the world's 50 million displaced people. The international community was faced with new emergency situations which affected Africa in particular. Political instability, the intensification of conflict situations, and the constant occurrence of natural disasters further exacerbated the continent's precarious condition. Ghana therefore welcomed UNHCR's efforts to strengthen cooperation between UNHCR and Africa's various regional bodies and to revitalize its cooperation with the African Development Bank with a view to promoting efforts to provide lasting solutions for displaced persons.

40. The revitalization of the African Union and the creation of NEPAD demonstrated the desire of African countries to regain the initiative in the battle to overcome the political, social and economic obstacles that had plagued the continent of Africa for too long. Her delegation welcomed UNHCR's declared intention to support African and multilateral initiatives, as well as its decision to adopt an approach based on particular African population groups or situations, and the signing in November 2000 of a memorandum of understanding with ECOWAS. For its part, Ghana was eager to play an active role in those cooperation efforts.

41. Ghana welcomed the Agenda for Protection, which was a strategic document forged by the process of Global Consultations on international protection to steer the actions of Governments, international organizations and all partners concerned with the problems of refugees. Ghana was in favour of all measures aimed at implementing multilateral agreements, and was particularly interested in the "Convention Plus" initiative, which was designed to complement the 1951 Convention on the status of refugees.

42. With respect to the particular situation of women and child refugees, who accounted for over 70 per cent of the world's 50 million refugees, and to their particularly vulnerable condition (which had been demonstrated by recent events), Ghana condemned, in the strongest possible terms, the heinous acts of sexual exploitation committed against them. UNHCR should be warmly congratulated for implementing a programme against sexual exploitation in Africa and elsewhere. Ghana welcomed the active participation of women refugees as well as the efforts of the working group set up by the Inter-agency Standing Committee, which was notably charged with preventing exploitation and sexual violence in situations of humanitarian crisis.

43. Lastly, her delegation wished to stress the importance of providing UNHCR with appropriate funding and with unreserved support for all its initiatives aimed at strengthening cooperation with other United Nations partner organizations (World Bank; UNDP; the United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA; and UNICEF), because UNHCR played such a vital role in the global process of peacekeeping and maintaining international security with a view to ensuring socio-economic development.

44. **Mr. Mwakawago** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that Tanzania endorsed Angola's statement on behalf of the SADC. Referring to paragraph 50 of the High Commissioner's 2001 report (A57/12), he regretted the fact that nothing had been said about why "there were signs of declining public tolerance of refugees, particularly among impoverished local communities in the hosting regions" or about the plight of the 170,000 refugees who had not received assistance from UNNHCR. Lamenting the report's omissions, he recalled that since the late 1950s Tanzania had consistently hosted refugees; that in the 1970s it had voluntarily offered to naturalize over 30,000 Rwandan refugees (an offer that had been accepted by 7,000 of those refugees); that in 1993, following the assassination of Burundi's President, it had given asylum to a large number of Burundian refugees; and that in 1994, following the aeroplane crash that had taken the lives of the Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, it had been obliged to host more than 600,000 Rwandan refugees, with communities close to Rwanda and Burundi hosting over 500,000 refugees, leading to a state of demographic disequilibrium, with the flow of refugees accelerating the deterioration of the environment and producing an increase in crime. The Government of Tanzania was therefore extremely concerned that it was being asked to continue its open its borders to refugees (while other countries were closing theirs) without receiving adequate support from the international community.

45. Although his delegation was willing to search for innovative solutions to the refugee problem, it was concerned about the High Commissioner's initiative to achieve development through on-site integration, and believed that it should be subjected to careful and selective scrutiny, on a case-by-case basis. The High Commissioner should consult ExCom and the other parties involved and then report back to the General Secretariat before implementing the initiative. The Government of Tanzania remained convinced that voluntary repatriation, not integration, was the best way to achieve a lasting solution to the refugee problem. By participating in efforts to reconstruct their countries of origin, returnees could help promote the process of national reconciliation.

46. The United Republic of Tanzania welcomed the initiatives proposed by the High Commissioner regarding post-conflict situations and believed that they would help achieve the goal of the "4Rs" (repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction).

47. Lastly, his delegation was deeply concerned at the decline in resources allocated to UNHCR, as well as by its consequences for all parties involved. There was a danger that, in view of the budget deficit of 25 million dollars announced in the report, the onus to provide assistance to refugees would fall increasingly upon hosting States, most of which were already struggling against poverty.

48. **Ms. Msadabwe Lambart** (Zambia), after expressing her delegation's support for Angola's statement on behalf of the SADC, said that Zambia was currently hosting some 270,000 refugees. Ever since UNHCR had opened its first camp for African refugees, in 1966, Zambia's policy had been to welcome asylum-seekers, and the material and financial costs of that policy had been very high. In 2001, a further 21,500 Angolan refugees had arrived in Zambia, where they made up the largest refugee group. However, since the peace agreement signed by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the Angolan Government, the influx of refugees had slowed significantly.

49. Of the around 270,000 refugees in Zambia, 134,809 lived in the country's urban and rural areas, participating in the social and economic life of the local population. The remainder lived in the country's various settlements, camps and transit centres. Because they were so numerous, the refugees were placing a considerable strain on the economic and social infrastructure of hosting regions. The situation was made all the more serious by the fact that they received no humanitarian aid from the international community. The refugees represented an additional burden for social services, especially in the areas of, education, health, and water supply and sanitation, where supply levels were already insufficient. As a result, local authorities were becoming increasingly overwhelmed.

50. The presence of armed elements and former combatants among Zambia's refugee population had led to the proliferation of illegal weapons and an increase in armed crime, which seriously threatened national peace and stability, especially in border regions. In order to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons conducted by some former combatants, the Zambian authorities were disarming refugees who were known to be former combatants and

separating them from civilian refugees, in order to ensure that they did not use refugee camps and settlements as places in which to regroup. Civilian refugees were therefore protected against violence and forced conscription. The camp for asylum-seekers who were former combatants was set up in 2000 and presently held 2,278 refugees.

51. Despite those difficulties, the Zambian Government was determined to keep its doors open to refugees and other asylum-seekers and to search for a lasting solution to the problem at the local level. The Zambian initiative, which could not achieve the desired results without the assistance of the international community, thus aimed to improve the situation of refugees and local population groups, particularly in the areas of health, education, water supply and sanitation, agriculture, environment and infrastructure. The initiative had been welcomed by Zambia's partners, and the United Nations country team had already offered its support. The international community was invited to provide material and financial assistance, through the competent United Nations bodies. Zambia thanked the Governments of the United Sates of America, Japan and Norway for the assistance they had provided, both in cash and in kind. Zambia paid tribute to the activities conducted in the field by non-governmental organizations, and urged the international community to support those activities.

52. The measures adopted by Zambia to deal with the question of refugees focussed on the refugees' hope that they would one day be able to return to their countries of origin when the political situation allowed. That might soon prove to be the case in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda. It should be stressed that 10,000 Angolan refugees had already returned home, entirely of their own volition and without assistance. Zambia hoped that a tripartite framework would soon be set up between the Angolan and Zambian Governments and UNHCR, with a view to initiating, by the start of 2003, the biennial programme for the repatriation of around 70,000 Angolans per year. That programme would entail additional spending, not just by UNHCR, but also by the Governments concerned. Under the terms of Zambia's initiative, the Zambian authorities would continue to provide farming land for refugees who chose to remain in the country.

53. **Mr. Dogan** (Croatia), drawing the Committee's attention to the section of UNHCR's report (A/57/12) concerning South-eastern Europe, said that he wished to provide additional information concerning the return of refugees to Croatia.

54. The Croatian Government was doing everything in its power to facilitate the return of all the refugees - including those who had been displaced - to their home regions. In particular, it was trying to speed up reconstruction of homes and infrastructures destroyed during the war, while offering temporary shelter, carrying out mine clearance activities, and promoting the economic recovery of the areas to which the refugees would be returning. The recovery of those areas was of particular importance because merely reconstructing homes and infrastructures was not enough to ensure the lasting return and reintegration of returnees. With respect to the other major issue - the recovery of property - the Croatian Government had in October 2001 adopted a draft law on the recovery of property and housing in order to implement the national plan of action adopted in December 2001, which would mainly benefit refugees returning from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The draft law, which was scheduled for completion by the end of 2003, provided for a comprehensive set of measures, including the recovery of 3,968 homes before the end of 2002 and the allocation of supplementary funds for the construction, renovation and repurchase of homes. The Croatian Parliament had approved several amendments to the law on reconstruction and the law on priority State matters. The amendments had established property recovery procedures that were more coherent and more transparent, because they repealed all discriminatory provisions and guaranteed that all returnees would enjoy the right of return, under conditions of equality, and without distinction as to nationality. All the measures introduced were helping to improve the overall situation and facilitating the reintegration of expatriate citizens. As a result, 66,882 people had been repatriated to Croatia Over a period of two-and-a-half years. Of that total, 36,797 belonged to minority groups and had returned from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or Bosnia and Herzegovina.

55. The return of refugees and displaced persons was no longer a political question, but depended essentially on the economic situation of the Croatian regions concerned. Although the Croatian Government had been forced to make new budget cuts to meet the recommendations of international financial institutions

and to adapt its economic system to that of the European Union, it continued to fund the bulk of the measures announced, and remained determined to implement fully all activities aimed at refugees, displaced persons and returnees.

56. **Mr. Abuelgasim** (Sudan) said that, due to its geographical location, Sudan had, for the past 30 years, hosted an increasing number of refugees, generously and without restriction, despite the economic and environmental consequences. He hoped that the international community would continue to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees until their voluntary repatriation under conditions of peace and dignity. Responsibilities should be shared between host countries, UNHCR, and the international community. Since UNHCR was gradually disengaging from refugee assistance and protection activities, new impetus should be given to relief efforts deployed by Sudan, notably with regard to natural resources, infrastructure, health, and education.

57. Sudan was cooperating with UNHCR and with the refugees' countries of origin and implementing the voluntary repatriation programme while striving to accelerate the process for Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees. The most sustainable solution was to facilitate reconstruction of the countries of origin before accelerating the voluntary repatriation process for refugees and displaced persons.

58. With respect to the protection of refugees, especially children and minors, as well as the protection of their basic rights, Sudan (which applied the principle of the "4Rs") appealed for cooperation from UNHCR. He was very concerned that the level of resources allocated had declined significantly and no longer covered the spending required for programmes approved by ExCom. That decline in resources was having a negative impact on UNHCR's activities in Africa, where needs were even greater than in other geographical regions. He endorsed the High Commissioner's appeal for donors to increase their contributions and seek innovative ways to increase resources.

59. Sudan had always guaranteed the security of United Nations officials and emergency field workers, who were an essential part of efforts to protect refugees (especially vulnerable population groups), and Sudan deplored the killing of such personnel.

60. Sudan reaffirmed its determination to respect regional and international human rights instruments, but wished to enter a reservation to Article 26 of the 1951 Convention, in order to respect its obligations under article 3 of the 1969 Organization for African Union Convention on refugees.

61. **Ms. Saiga** (Japan) said that she was delighted that the situation of refugees in Afghanistan was finally beginning to improve, and that in Sierra Leone, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sri Lanka, the peace process was progressing. She wished to assure those countries of her support in their efforts to consolidate peace, which would clearly take time to bear fruit. The cautious optimism inspired by the progress achieved should not be allowed to obscure the reality of unresolved conflicts such as that taking place in Liberia, or of recently emerged problems, such as those in Côte d'Ivoire.

62. Japan would continue to support efforts to identify lasting solutions, which were a key element in refugee protection, and essential, not just in terms of ensuring that the international community did not weary of providing asylum and funds, but also in terms of giving hope to refugees. Indeed, the guiding principle in that regard should be the desire to demarginalize refugees, as much as to protect them. That was why Japan would lend its full support to the "4Rs" approach proposed by the High Commissioner, as well as to the concept of development by local integration, which sought to give refugees the opportunity to become agents for the development of the countries that had offered them asylum.

63. In Afghanistan, Japan had launched its regional comprehensive development assistance programme (the "Ogata Initiative"), which was designed to ensure a seamless transition from humanitarian assistance to assistance with the reconstruction of the country, and which might provide an opportunity to "test" the "4Rs" approach. Japan had given UNHCR 33 million dollars in financial assistance, in order to support its efforts to ensure the lasting and secure reintegration of returnees. Japan extended its warmest thanks to neighbouring countries that had agreed to host the millions of refugees.

64. Japan wished to express its support for the concept of development through local integration envisaged under the Zambian initiative, which was aimed at evaluating development needs in the west of

the country. Once those needs had been determined, several countries, including Japan, would endeavour to meet them. In order to ensure the success of the operation, it would also be necessary for the host country to take over its administration, for donor countries to provide assistance, for development agencies to lend their support, and for UNHCR to act as the catalyst.

65. Japan was participating in efforts to find lasting solutions through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), a joint enterprise inspired by the belief that if bilateral development agencies were to focus on meeting the needs of communities sheltering refugees, then UNHCR could focus on protection and assistance activities. A complementary assistance programme of that kind had already been introduced in Kigoma, in western Tanzania.

66. At its fifty-third session, ExCom had approved the Agenda for Protection, which contained 169 recommendations for those involved in refugee problems, including civil society. Japan intended to participate actively in discussions on implementing the Agenda. In 2002 it had decided to increase its support for efforts to accommodate duly recognized refugees within its borders, as well as to improve the living conditions of asylum-seekers. It was also re-examining its procedures for recognizing refugee status. In that regard, Japan was particularly concerned about the protection of refugees and wished to stress that refugees could participate in development only if they were fully integrated in society, whether in their countries of origin or elsewhere.

67. **Mr. Laurin** (Canada) said that the Global Consultations on international protection and the adoption of the Agenda for Protection had given renewed impetus to the search for innovative ways to meet the needs of refugees around the world. Durable solutions had at last been found for Afghan refugees, and those solutions could be applied to other protracted situations, such as the situation in Angola.

68. Canada continued to adhere to the principles of international solidarity and to contribute actively to efforts to improve the sharing of burdens. It welcomed the reforms introduced by the High Commissioner to make administrative and oversight staff more responsible. Canada supported the renewal of the mandate of the High Commissioner, and looked forward to reading his 2003 report. However, in order to ensure the success of the aforementioned reforms, he should ensure that States and other partners, especially non-governmental organizations, other United Nations agencies, and international financial institutions, were participants from the outset.

69. Because the concept of protection should lie at the heart of actions undertaken, Canada preferred to place the emphasis on the principle of the prohibition of expulsion or return set out in the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as in international customary law.

70. Canada welcomed the High Commissioner's proposals for implementing the Agenda for Protection, and backed the idea of holding a forum on international protection that might promote discussion about new strategies for meeting refugees' needs, as well as complement the work of the Inter-agency Standing Committee and of ExCom itself. Canada also supported the "Convention Plus" initiative, which emphasized a flexible approach to the problems posed by secondary movements of refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as the need to find more equitable arrangements for burden-sharing and to improve access to resources for development aid in order to meet refugees' needs.

71. Canada welcomed UNHCR's emphasis on lasting solutions, self-reliance, and the need to recognize the useful contribution that refugees could make to host countries, and urged States to ensure that local integration became a de facto and de iure reality. It also welcomed the insistence on the transition from humanitarian assistance to development, the fact that the High Commissioner was working to achieve that goal together with international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations, and the recognition that refugees' needs should be taken into account in the planning process. Canada also welcomed the links that ExCom had established with NEPAD, and the fact that some aspects of the G8 Africa Action Plan were directly concerned with the search for lasting solutions.

72. Canada shared the High Commissioner's concerns regarding mixed flows of refugees and economic migrants, and therefore believed that it was vital to be able to distinguish between the two types of movement in order to preserve the integrity of the asylum system and maintain support for international protection.

73. Canada believed strongly that it was necessary to ensure not only the legal protection of refugees, but also their physical and social protection, and that it was therefore vital, in order to maintain security in the camps, that combatants be separated from non-combatants as early as possible, that the camps be properly administrated, and that community services and measures aimed at protection and assistance be coordinated. Canada was concerned at the allegations of sexual violence in the camps and wished to emphasize the need to ensure that refugees were neither exploited nor mistreated. It therefore approved the formulation and implementation of the plan of action by the Inter-agency Standing Committee as well as the formulation and implementation of the code of conduct by UNHCR.

74. **Mr. Goussous** (Jordan) said that his country had been involved in the question of the new international humanitarian order ever since its first appearance on the agenda of the General Assembly. The new world order called for by the then President of the United States of America, following the end of the Cold War, had done nothing more than exacerbate the world's state of disarray, leading to ever increasing numbers of victims of armed conflicts and of human rights violations.

75. His delegation wished to pay tribute to humanitarian agencies and to the efforts of the United Nations to increase the coordination and effectiveness of their actions. It was of course essential to provide relief to the victims, but that alone was not enough. Efforts should also be made to eliminate the root causes of the problems involved while providing victims with the means for survival. International action on humanitarian emergencies should be rationalized. His delegation therefore welcomed the initiative of the delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the basic principles of humanitarian action in emergency situations.

76. Efforts should be made - especially in developing countries – further to increase the consolidation of local and national mechanisms for prevention and for overseeing emergency humanitarian situations. The donor community should support the strengthening of local capacities and promote self-reliance, rather than increase the burden of debt. For their part, developing countries should set up early-warning systems and seek to identify local solutions to existing or potential humanitarian problems. In that regard, his delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposal to set up national commissions that would work to identify solutions while assisting efforts undertaken at the national and international levels, thus enhancing such efforts while also gaining a greater understanding of them. The Commissions would also function as national discussion partners of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

77. While his delegation welcomed the decline in the number of refugees, it believed that much more importance should be attached to the problem of internally displaced persons, whose numbers presently far exceeded those of refugees. The Secretary-General had on several occasions insisted on the need to find solutions to the many humanitarian questions often neglected in the past, such as the problem of the expulsion and subsequent return of large population groups. His delegation wished to draw the Committee's attention in particular to war widows and orphans, victims of unrest, and handicapped persons, whose plight was of particular concern to Jordan. With respect to Jordan's recommendation that a special group of government representatives be set up, his delegation wished to point out that such a group could help formulate the agenda for humanitarian action proposed by the Secretary-General and would provide a valuable complement to the Agenda for Peace and the Agenda for Development.

78. The draft resolution that his delegation would be submitting to the Third Committee had been inspired by a number of resolutions previously adopted by the General Assembly, and he therefore hoped that it would be adopted without a vote.

79. **Mr. Paiva** (Observer for the International Organization for Migration) recalled that the High Commissioner had referred in his opening remarks to the relationship between forced and voluntary migration in a changing world, and the need to tackle international migration, especially refugee movements, through a global, forward-looking approach. Such an approach would require that OIM and UNHCR engage in regular discussions about ways to strengthen cooperation, especially in cases where questions of asylum and migration intersected. The two organizations had worked closely together since their creation in the 1950s, but their collaboration had initially focused largely on resettlement in third countries. Since then, they had been brought closer

together by large-scale emergency operations, and they had cooperated in areas as diverse as voluntary repatriation, development through local integration, capacity-building, awareness-raising campaigns, and the promotion of intergovernmental dialogue.

80. At present, international population movements were increasing and comprised mixed flows of people leaving their countries for different reasons. It was therefore all the more important that the international community comprehend the link between asylum and migration, which, moreover, was one of the key issues considered during the Global Consultations held under UNHCR's auspices. To that end, the two organizations had set up a joint action group on asylum and migration, which met regularly to consider overall policy and ways to strengthen their cooperation.

81. The international community as a whole should identify management practices that would encourage organized population movements and discourage irregular migration, and that process would require closer cooperation, considerable flexibility, and a balanced approach.

82. **Ms. Lewis** (International Labour Organization) noted that ILO was required under its mandate to pay particular attention to the protection of international migrant workers. She agreed with the High Commissioner that the demarginalization of refugees required the promotion of self-reliance and development through local integration. Recent research had shown that certain aspects of globalization tended to encourage migration, so that the distinctions that traditionally separated refugees, as defined in the 1951 Convention, and persons displaced for other reasons, had become increasingly blurred. Some people sought refuge in a neighbouring or third country in order to flee war, human rights violations and generalized violence, and yet did not regard themselves as refugees. On the other hand, migrant workers, who were often in an irregular situation, did claim refugee status. Once authorized to travel, those who had been granted refugee status by States were often treated the same way as other migrants, whether under labour laws or administrative laws, or by employers and the general public. Moreover, manifestations of hostility towards foreigners or xenophobic violence did not generally make any distinction as to the legal status of the victims, as had been made clear during the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

83. The concerns of ILO and UNHCR coincided on three points. First, migrants and refugees were human beings who found themselves, outside their countries, in situations of insecurity, and their rights had to be protected. Second, such refugees were also workers, for whom a job was an essential means to recover their identity and security, whether they were trying to integrate themselves into host countries or resettlement countries, or whether they were returning home under a voluntary repatriation programme. Third, it was necessary to formulate a coherent international policy which, in order to take account of the refugee and migration elements of the workforce, must provide measures and mechanisms other than the asylum system, to govern regular migration; incorporate the migrant and refugee dimension in policies on development, assistance, and investment; regularize the situation of long-term refugees in an irregular situation; and introduce legislation to combat discrimination against non-nationals.

84. In 2004, migrant workers would be the subject of the general debate of the International Labour Organization. Moreover, international governance for migration had been included in the agenda of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which would present its conclusions and recommendations during 2003, and in which UNHCR would be participating.

85. In the field, cooperation between ILO and UNHCR had recently developed considerably and was concerned with interventions in humanitarian emergencies. Over the past three years, ILO had been at the forefront of crisis intervention and employment-focussed reconstruction activities in Afghanistan, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Timor-Leste, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Kosovo, Somalia, southern Lebanon, and Sri Lanka, among other countries. Furthermore, a working group on the partnership between UNHCR and ILO met on a regular basis and formulated joint projects to deal with major crises.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.